

BAA President Blog – 2nd June 2023

Hi everyone,

I want to talk about the HTS scheme and my experience as an examiner. I try to cover at least one exam a year, if possible, to support the profession and keep my knowledge of the scheme up to date, but it is also always useful CPD for me.

As most of you will know, the traditional HTS modules relate to acquiring theoretical knowledge via M-level training, as well as developing practical skills to become competent in clinical practice. Clinical experts in each field developed the content, scope, knowledge required, and learning outcomes for each module. Gaining an externally verified clinical competence certificate can only be a good thing, both for the continuing development of the individual audiologist who can obtain a nationally recognised professional qualification, and for the service itself - to demonstrate that staff competency has been externally verified.

Recently, BAA opened an equivalence route for the Paediatric Assessment HTS module, so that experienced paediatric audiologists trained via other routes could be externally verified. Let's be honest - putting yourself forward as a candidate for an equivalency exam after you have done the job for years is brave. I've seen how stressful it can be - you may not have done an exam for years, and yet here you are - asking yourself why on earth you invited people you don't know to watch you with patients, all the while scribbling things down on their clipboards so they can ask you tough questions about what you did afterwards. (A bit like when your department has its first IQIPs visit, and they are doling out findings like sweets, and you are nodding along while secretly wanting to scream... but afterwards you realise it was mostly useful recommendations...). But remember, the examiners actually want you to pass! And they will likely ask questions in the viva where you can explain why something didn't go well, and you can redeem yourself.

But being a HTS candidate and being an examiner are excellent for that thing called lifelong learning, which is something we all must embrace. Nothing is the same as when I qualified as an Audiological Scientist in the 90s. I've had to continually update my knowledge and practice. It's too easy to do what you have always done and forget why.

Gaining an HTS certificate means the candidate has proven they can not only pass academic modules and are safe clinically with patients, but also that they can justify what they do scientifically and think on their feet in a real-life situation. The HTS ensures actual evidence-based practice, and as one candidate said, "it removes any institutionalised thinking".

I found being an examiner may be the next best thing to doing the whole module all over again, as I had to remind myself of the HTS requirements, check up to date evidence, etc. But then I find myself checking that my own practice is good enough and feeding back about keeping things tight when I go back to your own department. Plus, who doesn't like going to other departments, meeting lovely audiologists, and getting ideas to take home?

So keep on with lifelong learning, and as always, share your thoughts at admin@baaudiology.org

Take care

Sam Lear